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AGRICULTURE

Ukrainian Livestock Industry Still Lagging: Broadcasts on agricultural activities virtually ceased following the announcement of Stalin's death on 6 March and were not resumed until the 15th. The last detailed report on the subject was contained in a 3,000-word, 25-point decision of the Ukrainian Party's Central Committee "on measures to improve the livestock industry" carried by RADIANSKA UKRAINA on 5 March. Reviewing the progress of cattle-breeding in the Republic, the plenary session of the Central Committee found that many of the achievements made by that industry have been vitiated by the unusually high death rate and low birth rate of cattle:

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... in a number of oblasts and many rayons huge losses of cattle are sustained and the sterility of the female stock is great; all that causes much damage to the State and collective farms.

Ukrainian text:

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... v ryadi oblastei i v bigatyokh rayonakh dopuskayutsya velyki vtraty khudoby vid padezhu, velyka yalovist matoch-nogo pogolovya, shcho zavdaye velykoy shkody derzhavi i kolgospam.

The situation was said to be particularly alarming in Chernigov, Zhitomir, Sumy and Kiev oblasts whose performance in 1952 was worse than in 1951, and there is no visible improvement this year. Their yearly livestock plans were not fulfilled, "the losses of young cattle were inordinate and wintering conditions inadequate." The shortage of fodder in a number of oblasts, the decision pointed out, had been brought about partially by faulty distribution but chiefly by the failure of the local authorities to make proper use of the available resources and establish adequate fodder bases. Lack of concentrated fodder is said to be responsible for the "very low productivity" (duzhe nyzka produktyvnist) of the major livestock in Zaporozhye, Nikolayev and Kirovograd oblasts. Reiterating the platitude that cattle-breeding without fodder is unthinkable, the decision points to Chernigov Oblast as an example not to be emulated. Although the fodder-procurement plan in that oblast has been fulfilled by only 71 percent, mowed hay has been left to rot on an area of 20,000 hectares. A similar situation is said to exist in Sumy, Poltava, Kirovograd and Voroshilovgrad Oblasts.

The only other regional source discussing the topic in the period under review is KIROVOGRADSKAYA PRAVDA of 20 March. Acknowledging the "just criticism" leveled at the oblast by the Party's Central Committee, the paper admits that "the plan for increasing the number of animals of all kinds last year was fulfilled by only six rayons." The only improvement achieved so far this year, it appears, is in the "average indices" for the oblast as a whole. Such averages, however, should not mislead anyone, for behind them "are hidden serious shortcomings in the work of the Party, Soviet and agricultural organs." The truth is that in many rayons the cattle remain underfed because many fodder-processing machines remain idle much of the time and the farmers are compelled to feed the livestock nothing but hay. The productivity of stock breeding therefore remains "extremely low" which accounts for the failure of the farmers to deliver large quantities of milk, wool and other products:

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In many kolkhozes the number of animals not only was not increased but was actually decreased, the wintering of livestock was organized unsatisfactorily, fodder is spent without control ... and not all the animals are housed in heated premises.

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Spring Sowing, Tractor Repairs, Cadres: A lengthy report broadcast from Tashov on 17 March says that a recent conference of agricultural officials discovered that the oblast "is still behind in its agricultural assignments." Despite the fact that the amount of grain harvested in 1952 was smaller than that of the previous year, no steps are being taken to raise the yield in 1953. As pointed out by one of the speakers at the conference, "We have low harvest yields because the collective farms and MTS are late with the fundamental operations," that is, no one has bothered to see that the necessary preparations are made on time so that field work may be started under favorable conditions. The maintenance and servicing of tractors and combines are said to have been so poor that the resulting premature breakdowns have prevented the machine-tractor stations from keeping their contractual agreements with the collective farms. The result is that "not a single machine-tractor station has fulfilled the State plan for harvest yields." An enormous number (gromadnoye slichestvo) of tractors and trailers is still laid up for want of repair. Looking into the cadre situation, the conference found that the number of available qualified tractor and combine operators was not large enough to run the machines more than one shift per day. It appears that the agricultural authorities, instead of pursuing the training program for mechanization specialists, prefer to use make-shift methods such as shifting the available qualified workers from one "bottle-neck" to another rather than to send them off to school and deprive themselves of their service. Apart from the personnel problem which is still "crying for solution," there are numerous other shortcomings which, if left unchecked, may well retard the preparations for spring sowing. Emphasized in this connection is the "alarming state of affairs" in regard to seed procurement since many agricultural artels are reported to have "insufficient supplies of seed of their own." This, says the decision, is a distinct violation of the agricultural regulations which specify that every collective farm must provide the necessary amount of seed for its own requirements. There was little discussion of the livestock industry, at least in the broadcast version of the conference. However, one brief reference to the topic mentioned the necessity of "creating normal conditions" for the livestock, particularly in winter time, thereby implicitly admitting that prevailing conditions are somewhere below the normal level. That point is given added weight in the exhortation to "work day and night" (rabotat dnyom i nochyu) in order to achieve the required conditions.

The shortage of skilled workers in agriculture is the subject of a talk by Lipanov broadcast from Kurgan on 18 March. Many of the oblast MTS and collective farms are reported to have been violating the plan by sending only a fraction of the prescribed number of workers to attend the mechanization schools. The Polovinsky MTS, for example, "has not sent a single worker" to school, and only 13 of its personnel are attending courses on the spot as against the planned 70. This MTS, says Lipanov, is unfortunately not an isolated case as may be gathered from the large number of semi-skilled men assigned to handle complicated farm equipment for which they have no adequate training. The powerful "S-80" machines are operated by people without special training with the inevitable results of low efficiency and frequent breakdowns.

A short-rized transmission from Stavropol (18 March) lists nine of the krai's rayons where "procrastination of spring sowing work can no longer be tolerated." Although the local Party and agricultural authorities are aware of the shortcomings and have initiated measures to overcome them, such as socialist competition, the mentioned rayons do not seem to be making any headway. This is because the "very measures designed to remedy the situation" are carried out haphazardly without much regard for the ultimate objective, that is, a successful spring sowing campaign. A hint that bad management may not be the only reason for the poor performance is contained in the passing reference to the collective farmers' cultural and material amenities and in the suggestion that "housing facilities for collective farm workers and mechanizers be put in good condition."

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A broadcast from Kursk (19 March) quotes a report carried by KURSKAYA PRAVDA on a recent oblast conference of collective-farm chairmen. They were told that "the main agricultural tasks" were not being fulfilled and agricultural statute violations had been noted in a number of unspecified areas. In Mikhailevskiy, Dmitrievka and Chernyansky rayons the shortage of qualified personnel is said to be so acute that "inexperienced cadres are supervising the work" of all field labor. "Labor discipline is lax" among the field teams and brigades and the whole job of field sowing and preparations is being mismanaged to an astonishing degree.

Discussing the recent merger of the various agricultural ministries into a single Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Stocks, PRAVDA says editorially (19 March) that the action was taken to "liquidate the duplication" (likvidirovat parallelizm) in the work of the different organizations and to "release many highly qualified specialists" for work in the collective farms and machine-tractor stations. As pointed out in a previous CPW report, the official reason given for the centralization of authority in the various ministries was "to improve the leadership" (uluchsheet rukovodstvo), but there was no indication as to the nature of improvement to be achieved. It now appears, according to PRAVDA's implicit reference to the theme, that the streamlining of the Ministry of Agriculture is designed to enable it to speed up both decisions and action when the occasion requires. Thus the top-heavy administrative machinery is to be reduced by a large-scale transfer of "desk specialists" to actual field work while policy-making functions are presumably to be concentrated in fewer hands than before. The methods used by the previous leadership, it is pointed out, were stereotyped (shablonnye) and formal while authority was diffused among the numerous agricultural organizations which

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lacked operativeness and the ability to make correct and speedy decisions on essential problems affecting the life of collective and State farms and machine-tractor stations.

Russian text:

CPYRGHT

nedostavalo operativnosti, umenia pravilno i bystro reshat aktualnie voprosy zhizni kolhozov, sovkhozov i mashinno-traktornykh stantsiy.

The paper asserts also that the new leadership is now faced with the enormous task of improving the preparations for spring sowing which in a number of areas have not justified expectations. Thus in Kirov, Velikie Luki, Pskov and Novgorod oblasts the number of available tractors is insufficient to begin spring work. Even in the southern areas of the country--Rostov Oblast, Krasnodar and Stavropol krais--where sowing is scheduled to start within a week or so--much of the field equipment has not yet been put in working condition.

The change-over to large-scale collective farming (ukрупnennoye kollektivnoye khozaistvo), it is further stated, presents greater problems rather than smaller ones. Implicitly admitted here is the fact that while the benefits derived from enlarging the collective farms are undoubtedly greater than before, agricultural statute violations also tend to increase in scale. It is this malpractice which the new leadership is expected to weed out since statute violations frequently involve officials and organizations outside the Ministry of Agriculture:

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Violations of the agricultural statute which are manifested particularly in squandering collective farm property are taking place with the connivance of local Party and Soviet organizations as well as agricultural organs.

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Russian text:

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Pri popustitelstve mestnykh partiynykh i sovetskikh organizatsiy, a takhe selskokhozaistvennykh organov imeyut mesto narusheniya Ustava selskokhozaistvennoy arteli, vyrazhayushiesya, v chastnosti, v razbazarivani kolkhoznogo dobra.

That Poltava oblast had failed to fulfill its winter-plowing plan is confirmed in a broadcast of 19 March reporting on the findings of a special oblast conference of Party secretaries and agricultural officials and specialists. Low harvest yields, particularly maize, had been gathered throughout the oblast, especially in Drabivskiy, Zgurskiy, Grebinkibskiy, Soplevskiy, Dykanskiy, Starinskiy, Yarotinsky and a number of other unnamed rayons. Preparations for spring sowing were found to be "insufficient" (nedostatni) and the progress of the stock-breeding industry disappointing. One of the speakers at the conference is quoted as saying that "we must bear in mind the many shortcomings of last year, in cattle breeding and in field work" and that should encourage everyone concerned to "put an end to the abnormal situation" prevailing in the oblast's agriculture this year. CHKALOVSKAYA KOMMUNA (19 March) speaks of the "utterly intolerable" (sovershenno nevnosimoye) situation existing in some of the oblast's rayons where tractor repairs apparently do not keep up with the breakdowns. The work of the machine-tractor stations is in fact "much worse" (gorazdo khuzhe) than last year. The slowness and irresponsibility manifested by local agricultural officials "will not be tolerated any further," the paper goes on, and the administration of agricultural affairs will have to undergo a thorough overhauling. Most of the machine-tractor stations have failed to train a sufficient number of machine operators to secure an uninterrupted two-shift day on the fields, high-quality seeds have not been procured by the collective farms and in some unnamed places financial and production plans have not even been drawn up.

Following are extracts from some of the other items on agricultural shortcomings ranging from minor violations to infringement of the collective farm statute:

Lvov, 19 March--Some heads of machine-tractor stations and kolkhozes fail to understand the great importance of strict planning ... have not taken any measures to implement the plans for spring sowing (VILNA UKRIANA editorial);

Kiev, 20 March--Kiev oblast is on the eve of spring field work but in a number of rayons the preparations for the sowing campaign have not been completed (KIEVSKA PRAVDA editorial);

Alma Ata, 21 March--There are serious shortcomings in the preparations for spring sowing ... this all stems from the fact that leadership of the kolkhozes, sovkhoses and local Party and agricultural organizations is not yet strong enough (KAZAKH-STANSKAYA PRAVDA editorial);

Kostroma, 21 March--... procurement of seeds is badly organized in Ponazyrevskiy, Mezhevskiy and Manturovskiy rayons. A great loss of time is experienced in the work of tractor repairs, only two MTS ... having completed that work (SEVERNAYA PRAVDA editorial);

Kurgan, 22 March--... it was revealed that at 298 out of 524 kolkhozes there were cases of squandering of lands, grain and other products The total loss from the squandering of communal property in these 298 kolkhozes alone exceeds millions of rubles (KRASNY KURGAN editorial);

Odesa, 22 March--It is a fact that a number of MTS have not yet prepared more than 30 percent of the tractors for field work Party, Soviet and agricultural organs must intensify the struggle against violators of the Agricultural artel statute ... unsatisfactory work of the agricultural organs is noted in Mostovskiy, Andreyevo-Ivanovskiy, Domanevskiy and other rayons.

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Resettlements: Population shifts are not as a rule discussed on the Soviet radio or in the press but occasional references to "resettled" (pereselentsy) collective farmers on newly-acquired irrigated land or in the areas where the farm-labor shortage is obviously acute suggest that such shifts have been and are taking place. Judging by the inducements offered to potential settlers as well as their letters back home inviting friends and relatives to follow them, it would appear that the migration is entirely voluntary although a certain amount of "pressure" may exist. With a few exceptions, the movement of the farmers appears to be from the northern areas to the south, particularly Odessa, Nikolayev, Kherson, Crimea and Dnepropetrovsk oblasts. Something like a minor propaganda campaign to encourage the southward migration flared up early in 1952 but it soon died down and the theme has since been brought up on rare occasions. A recent letter (20 March) from a farmer now settled in Kherson Oblast appealing to the kolkhozniks of his native Drogobytch Oblast, western Ukraine, to move south and settle on the irrigated lands, reveals that "hundreds of agricultural workers" had already migrated to Odessa, Nikolayev and Kherson "for permanent settlement."

It may be worth while here to recall some of the previous references to rural and other resettlement which though little publicized, has apparently been carried out right along. On 4 February 1952 the Ryazan radio broadcast a talk by Kondratyev on "the planned resettlement of kolkhoz families and other population as a measure of great State importance." Appealing to the farmers to take up new residence in Leningrad, Sverdlovsk and Crimean oblasts "on a strictly voluntary basis," the speaker proceeded to list the advantages accruing from such a move. Travel is free for all those who wish to "resettle" and their stock will be transported free of charge. The new settlers were to be fully exempted for one year from household taxes, agricultural income tax, compulsory deliveries of stock breeding and agricultural produce including that of their private vegetable gardens. In the following three years "only 25 percent of the standard deliveries and taxes will be charged." Among the other inducements offered were loans on liberal terms for housing construction and the purchase of stock. In the case of permanent settlers in lumber camps and other forestry enterprises, as in Sverdlovsk Oblast for example, similar privileges would be extended to lumber deliveries, housing, insurance, etc.

In a talk broadcast from Tbilisi on 27 February 1952, the head of the Republican Resettlement Administration appealed to the collective farmers of the mountain regions to migrate to the newly reclaimed areas of the lowlands and steppes. New houses with 50 square meters of living space each were offered to every farm family in addition to government credits for the construction of barns and the purchase of equipment and livestock. "Exceptionally favorable conditions," including single grants, were offered to families of military employees. The Samgoria steppe and Kolkhida plan were the two areas to be settled and developed.

A broadcast from Lutsk (23 March 1952) urging the collective farmers to migrate "to the eastern oblasts of Soviet Ukraine," quotes from a letter from one of the new settlers describing "the immense prospect" (gromadnie perspektivy) for the development of Dnepropetrovsk Oblast. Each newly arrived family, the letter said, received "a house with a garden, two centners of wheat, two centners of cabbage and 1,000 rubles." A report from Simferopol (18 April 1952) stated that "settlers have been arriving in the Crimea from all parts of the country and have been quartered in well-built houses." Mentioned also was the fact that one kolkhoz alone in Belogorsk Rayon, had received more than 60 families "during the past two to three years." Additional arrivals of farmers to the Crimea were reported also a week later but, as in previous cases, there was no reference to the total number of settlers.

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The first intimation that farmers from the western Ukrainian provinces are also encouraged to settle in the south is contained in the radio appeal to the Drogobych kolkhozniks mentioned earlier in this report. This may be significant in view of the fact that the war-ravaged western oblasts of the Ukraine would seem to need all the available manpower to restore local agriculture to its prewar level. (Although officially such restoration has already been completed, in terms of total agricultural production, there has been no evidence that all the war-devastated collective farm houses and other farm buildings have been reconstructed or replaced by new ones.) Assuming that the terms of settlement offered to the Drogobych farmers are favorable enough to encourage them to pull up stakes, it is evident that their present standard of living leaves much to be desired. This is what they are told by one of the farmers who has lived in Kherson Oblast since May 1952:

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"I received a good house, 5,000 square meters of garden and a grant consisting of 1½ centners of white flour for myself and 50 kilos for each member of my family In seven months my wife, two sons and myself put in 1,453 work days and for this we received 43½ centners of wheat alone, and also a large amount of fruit and vegetables. All kolkhoz members live well and culturally (vse chleny kolkhoza zhivut khorosho i kulturno)."

The Welfare Theme is discussed editorially in non-specific terms by TRUD, RADYANSKA UKRAINA and IZVESTIA, all of them affirming that the material well-being of "all sections of the population" has been growing by leaps and bounds. True to the Soviet propaganda pattern, however, all discussion of this topic is confined to generalities and any reference to "individual material welfare" now or at the end of the current Five-Year Plan is consistently avoided. TRUD (15 March), for example, points to the "unprecedented" improvement in the standard of living by saying that by 1950 the prewar level of consumer-goods production had been increased by 200-300 percent. The end of the fifth Five-Year Plan would see another 60 percent increase in the national income, and further reductions of prices of consumer goods are visualized. Similar evasive statistics are presented by RADYANSKA UKRAINA on 20 March: "the five rounds of price reductions resulted in a net gain of 50 billion rubles for the Ukrainian people. The planned 60-percent increment in national income would mean "an increase of the workers' real wages by 35 percent and the farmers' income by 40 percent." Just what such improvements may mean in terms of cash, purchasing power or daily amenities is not indicated. IZVESTIA (20 March) adverts to the old method of juxtaposing the "rising material welfare" of the Soviet people with the "deteriorating standard of life" in the capitalist countries--in total figures. Thus the price of bread in the United States had risen 28 percent between 1947 and 1952 while "real wages" (realnaya zarabotnaya plata) had been systematically reduced. England, France, Italy and West Germany are said to be enduring still greater economic hardships. The understandable unwillingness to tamper with concrete facts and figures relating to individual material welfare is particularly obvious in the cautious references to the housing situation which is known to be below the prewar standard:

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Housing construction is going on at an unprecedented scale. If during the prewar years ... the total living space built amounted to 80 million square meters, then the living space area to be added during the fifth Five Year Plan ... will amount to approximately 105 million square meters.

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Russian text:

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S nevidannym razmakhom dedetsya zhlischchnoye stroitelstvo. Esli v dovoyennye gody ... bylo postroyeno 80 millionov kvadratnykh metrov zhiloy ploshchadi, to v pyatoy pyatiletke ... budut postroyeny zhlilie doma obshchey ploshchadyu okolo 105 millionov kvadratnykh metrov.

Translated into absolute figures of available housing accommodation per family or single person, the above data means little since no information has ever been volunteered as to housing space actually required in any critical area under discussion or the changes in population. The paper's reference to housing is indeed phrased to convey the impression that the problem has already been successfully solved, and the point is further "corroborated" by a comparison with the housing situation prevailing in the capitalist countries where "millions of people are sheltered in slums" (milliony ludey yutyatsya v trushchobakh).

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